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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-first session
Items 21 (b), 38, 41, 97 (a), (c), (d) and (e), 98 and 101 (b) of the preliminary list*
STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR REGIONS
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE ORGANIZATION FOR SECURITY AND COOPERATION IN EUROPE
SUPPORT BY THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM OF THE EFFORTS OF GOVERNMENTS TO PROMOTE AND CONSOLIDATE NEW OR RESTORED DEMOCRACIES
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION: TRADE AND DEVELOPMENT; INTEGRATION OF THE ECONOMIES IN TRANSITION INTO THE WORLD ECONOMY; INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION; AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT
ENVIRONMENT AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
AGENDA FOR DEVELOPMENT: RENEWAL OF THE DIALOGUE ON STRENGTHENING INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION FOR DEVELOPMENT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-first year

Note verbale dated 11 July 1996 from the Permanent Mission of Bulgaria to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Bulgaria to the United Nations has the honour to request that the annexed Sofia Declaration on Good-Neighbourly

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* A/51/50.

Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans, adopted at the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe, held at Sofia, on 6 and 7 July 1996 (see annex I), as well as the address by H.E. Mr. Jean Videnov, Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria to the participants in the meeting (see annex II) and the Chairman's summary (see annex III) be issued as an official document of the fifty-first session of the General Assembly, under the items 21 (b), 38, 41, 97 (a), (c), (d) and (e), 98 and 101 (b), of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

ANNEX I

Sofia Declaration on Good-Neighbourly Relations, Stability, Security and Cooperation in the Balkans, adopted at the meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe, held at Sofia, on 6 and 7 July 1996

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs and heads of delegations of countries of South-Eastern Europe met at Sofia on 6 and 7 July 1996. Ministers Theodor Melescanu, Milan Milutinovic, Theodoros Pangalos, Gueorgui Pirinski, Under-Secretary Onur Oymen, Deputy-Ministers Dr. Hasan Dervishbegovic and Arian Starova attended.

Representatives of Austria, as Chairman-in-Office of the Central European Initiative (CEI); Croatia; France; Germany; Hungary; Ireland, as Presidency of the European Union (EU); Italy; Russian Federation, also in its capacity of Chairman of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC); Slovenia; Switzerland, as Chairman-in-Office of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE); United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland; United States of America; the High Representative Carl Bildt, the Secretary-General of the Council of Europe, Daniel Tarschys, representatives of the United Nations, the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE), the European Community (EC), the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) and the World Bank also attended.

The Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, Mr. Jean Videnov, addressed the meeting.

Messages to the meeting were received from Russian President Boris Yeltsin, United States President William Clinton, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, French Prime Minister Alain Jupé, President of EC Jacques Santer, Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSCE) Region Evgueni Primakov, Austrian Minister for Foreign Affairs and Chairman-in-Office of the Central European Initiative (CEI) Wolfgang Schüssel.

The Ministers for Foreign Affairs convened their meeting at a time of crucial importance for the future of the region. Time has come for a new beginning of inter-State relations between the countries of the region and for developing a comprehensive multilateral cooperation. They pointed out that as a result of the profound changes in Europe, which started in 1989, the principles of democracy and market economy, respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms and the rule of law have become common values. With peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, a window of historic opportunity opens to fulfil the hopes and expectations of their peoples to live in lasting peace and prosperity.

The Ministers pointed out that multilateral cooperation in the Balkans has its pre-history and traditions. The meetings of the Foreign Ministers of the Balkan countries in Belgrade in 1988 and in Tirana in 1990 indicated substantial interest and introduced prospects to engage in a broad range of activities in the political, economic and humanitarian fields.

Taking into consideration positive past experience and new developments, the Ministers committed themselves that every effort shall be made to transform the region into an area of stability, security and cooperation in line with the general developments throughout Europe. These endeavours are aimed at contributing to the construction of a new Europe - a Europe of democracy, peace, unity and stability, thus enabling all nations in the region to live together in peace with each other as good neighbours.

The Ministers agreed to launch a comprehensive process of multilateral cooperation in the following areas:

- Enhancing good-neighbourly relations including confidence- and security-building measures;

- Development of economic cooperation through cross-border cooperation, upgrading transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructures, trade and investment promotion;

- Development of humanitarian, social and cultural contacts;

- Cooperation in the field of justice, the combating of organized crime, illicit drug and arms trafficking and the elimination of terrorism.

The Ministers stressed the importance of the improvement of multilateral political dialogue and cooperation at all levels and on all issues of common interest. They took note of the idea to establish a consultative assembly of the parliaments of the participating States.

The Ministers considered the prospects for multilateral cooperation in European perspective and as deriving from the common aspirations of each country of the region to integrate into Europe. In this connection they expressed their readiness to interact with other initiatives for regional cooperation in South-Eastern Europe with mutually reinforcing effect, stressing particularly the significance of the initiative of the European Union as well as the South-East European Cooperative Initiative. They also stated their willingness to develop cooperation on matters of common interest with the countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Central European Initiative.

ENHANCING STABILITY, SECURITY AND GOOD-NEIGHBOURLINESS

Good-neighbourly relations

The Ministers pointed out that lasting good-neighbourly relations between the countries of the region based on universally recognized principles of inter-State relations set forth in the Charter of the United Nations, the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter for a New Europe, are indispensable prerequisites for promoting the comprehensive process of multilateral cooperation. In this respect they expressed their determination to respect and put into practice all 10 principles - sovereign equality, respect for rights inherent in sovereignty, refraining from the threat of use of force, inviolability of frontiers, territorial integrity of States, peaceful settlement

of disputes, non-interference in internal affairs, respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, equal rights and self-determination of peoples, cooperation among States, fulfilment in good faith of obligations under international law. They stressed that all principles apply equally and unreservedly, each of them being interpreted taking into account the others. They focused on the importance of implementing General Assembly resolutions 48/84 B and 50/80 B on developing of good-neighbourly relations among Balkan States.

They also expressed support to the ongoing process of full normalization of the relations between the countries of the former Yugoslavia and the favourable conditions it creates for promoting good-neighbourly relations.

Confidence- and security-building measures

The Ministers shared the view that confidence- and security-building measures are of particular importance for enhancing peace and stability in the Balkans.

They stressed the significance of bilateral confidence- and security-building measure agreements signed so far, complementary to the Vienna Document 1994.

They agreed on the need for exploring the potential for developing confidence- and security-building measures with a regional scope of application.

They expressed support for a meeting of the Ministers of Defence of the Balkan States to be held at Sofia.

Overall implementation of the peace agreement

The Ministers stressed the importance of the General Framework Agreement for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina for enhancing stability and security in the region and the need for its full and strict implementation by the signatory parties. They confirmed the willingness of their respective countries to contribute to the consolidation of the peace process in all its aspects. They shared the view that multilateral cooperation in the Balkans will effectively contribute to the success of the peace implementation process. They expressed their understanding that constructive joint efforts by both the international community and the countries of the region, give new prospects for solving unsettled issues and differences and for transforming this part of Europe into a region of lasting peace and cooperation.

The Ministers emphasized that rapid reconstruction and economic recovery, with equal respect for interests and needs of all parties, is of prime importance for the lasting peace and stability in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Ministers stressed the importance of holding the elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina within the deadline set in the peace agreement. Free and

democratic elections represent a foundation of bodies and institutions, rebuilding confidence and common life in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

The Ministers commended the signing of the Agreement on the Subregional Arms Control in Florence on 14 June 1996, which they assessed as a major contribution to the implementation of the Dayton Agreement and the strengthening of the peace process.

They stressed that the countries of the region have the potential to contribute to the success of the economic reconstruction through appropriate arrangements.

DEVELOPING MULTILATERAL REGIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION

The Ministers noted the existing potential for developing multilateral economic cooperation, despite the difficulties of economic transition or post-conflict reconstruction that various countries of the region are facing today. They emphasized the importance of accelerated development of regional economic cooperation for achieving lasting stability in the whole region. Efforts should be made for introducing European norms and standards in the field of production, investment, transfer of technologies, financing and trade with the objective of integrating most of the economies of their countries into the European economy.

Cross-border cooperation

The Ministers agreed to promote the development of cross-border cooperation on a bilateral and multilateral basis in the framework of the relevant EU programmes, including the elaboration of a regional programme for its development with the assistance of EU and other international organizations and institutions. Such a programme will be directed towards the implementation of projects for improving border infrastructure, including road and railway communications with the border-crossing points, opening new border-check points, promotion of cross-border trade and tourism, protection of the environment. This cooperation will be developed on three different levels: State to State; region to region; people to people. The Ministers recommended to hold a meeting of the aid coordinators from their countries to analyse the state of implementation of existing programmes, identify priority projects of trans-regional dimension, identify the national contributions of the different countries and elaborate new joint projects to be submitted for possible financing to the European Community.

Transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructure

The Ministers stressed the necessity of accelerated infrastructure development in the region as an important factor for trade expansion, economic growth, as well as for overall regional stability. They reaffirmed the readiness of their countries to upgrade and modernize the transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructure in the region in interaction with

the countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Central European Initiative.

To this end they expressed their support for setting up a Trans-regional Centre for Transport Infrastructure in Sofia.

They also stressed the importance of the meeting of the Ministers of Transport of the BSEC participating States and the countries of CEI, which will be held in November 1996, according to the decisions of the BSEC Ministerial Meeting in Bucharest. They focused on the importance of the European Crete corridors passing through the region. They agreed to work jointly with the EU, G-24 and ECE on the issues of infrastructure development, attracting investments and integrating the region in the Trans-European Networks.

The Ministers also noted the importance of developing the transport infrastructure of the region and expressed their appreciation to the relevant ECE agreements; harmonizing the transport legislation of the countries of the region with EU legislation in that field, facilitating transport operations on bilateral basis, etc.

The Ministers took note of the idea for the establishment of a Balkan Agency for Transport Safety, which would be based on the European policy of integration and harmonization of the system of flight control.

The development of cooperation in the field of telecommunications and postal services, was defined as encouraging, as well as the steps to set up a Telecommunications coordination committee, a Balkan Postal Pool and other initiatives, undertaken at the April 1996 meeting of the Ministers of the Balkan countries responsible for posts and telecommunications.

Promotion of trade and investments

The Ministers discussed questions related to the promotion of trade and investment. They recommended the elaboration of measures for further trade facilitation, harmonizing of trade practices and in general encouraging regional trade.

The Ministers agreed to improve customs authorities cooperation through the conclusion of relevant agreements in order to establish more efficient customs clearance procedures. They also noted that a positive contribution to further promotion of regional cooperation could be the conclusion of bilateral agreements on free trade areas in conformity with EU regulations as applicable, and in line with the provisions of the World Trade Organization's agreements.

The Ministers agreed to support the activities of the Association of the Balkan Chambers of Commerce as an important venue for promoting the common interests of the business community in the region to expand and liberalize trade and for economic cooperation. The idea of creating a Regional Centre for Trade Promotion in one of the participating countries, to analyse trade policies in view of their harmonization and further liberalization was supported.

The Ministers confirmed the necessity for joint efforts aimed at creating a climate more conducive to attracting investments to the region, encouraging and promoting economic growth throughout the region. They underlined the importance of concluding agreements in the fields of protection and encouragement of investments and prevention of double taxation among the countries of the region.

The Ministers called for the international financial institutions, the EU and individual countries with a considerable investment potential to take part in this process through joint initiatives including economic conferences, business forums, etc.

Protection of the environment

The Ministers confirmed the necessity of promoting regional cooperation in the environmental protection on the basis of bilateral and multilateral instruments as well as the Declaration of the Ministers of environment from the region of the ECE, adopted by the Third Ministerial Conference on "Environment for Europe" of October 1995. The need for common endeavours was noted with regard to the transboundary impact of air pollution and the effects of industrial and nuclear accidents as well as transshipment of hazardous wastes. In this respect the importance of assessing the transboundary environmental impact was emphasized.

In this context the Ministers called on the international financial institutions, G-24 and other relevant international organizations to support initiatives and projects of the countries in the area.

PROMOTION OF HUMANITARIAN, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL COOPERATION

The Ministers expressed their conviction that the protection of human rights and the promotion of free personal and professional contacts, represent an essential element for lasting stability and a climate of confidence in the region.

The Ministers stated their readiness for the promotion of social and cultural cooperation, for widening the scope for humanitarian cooperation and personal human contacts on the basis of their international obligations and universally recognized human rights and principles such as: freedom of travel for personal or professional reasons, free access to and dissemination of information, freedom of contacts on the basis of family ties, facilitating the reunification of divided families and promotion of free individual contacts in the field of science, culture, sports and tourism. Examining ways towards the elimination of visas in all South-Eastern European countries would be a positive step in this direction, taking into account their international obligations.

The Ministers recalled their statement in the Tirana Joint Communiqué that persons belonging to national minorities have the right, within the existing constitutional order of their country, which guarantees equal rights and status for all, to freely express, preserve and develop their ethnic, cultural,

linguistic and religious identity, and to enjoy all human rights and fundamental freedoms in full equality with other citizens.

Desire was expressed for promoting and expanding the cultural, scientific and educational cooperation between the countries in south-eastern Europe and their institutions, competent in those spheres, not only in multilateral projects and initiatives within the region but also under the aegis of intergovernmental organizations in the spheres of culture, science and education.

Particular interest was expressed in the various forms of exchange in the areas of the arts and education.

The Ministers underlined the importance of youth exchange as well as the development of direct contacts between cultural, scientific and educational institutions and the setting up of networks for cooperation in specific fields.

The respect for the cultural heritage and the exchange of information on the illicit traffic of objects of cultural value were also taken into consideration.

The important role of the mass media for overcoming the negative stereotypes of the past, for free flow of information and for better mutual acquaintance with the cultural diversity of the region was underlined.

The Ministers agreed to encourage the involvement of non-governmental organizations and unions on the basis of professional, cultural and scientific interest into this process with the participation of representatives of all countries of the region.

ILLICIT DRUG AND ARMS TRAFFICKING AND COOPERATION IN THE FIELD OF JUSTICE, COMBAT OF ORGANIZED CRIME, ELIMINATION OF TERRORISM

The Ministers stressed the need for closer cooperation in the field of justice, combat of organized crime, illicit drug and arms trafficking and elimination of terrorism. They agreed to elaborate a regional programme which will complement national efforts in this respect.

This programme should envisage, inter alia, the accession of all countries of the region to the relevant international conventions and their effective implementation; exchange of information on the legislation of the countries and the changes taking place in them; creation of modalities between the competent institutions for a quick response to requests for legal assistance.

The Ministers expressed their condemnation of all acts, methods and practices of terrorism, regardless of their motivation, in all its forms and manifestations and pointed out the need to take all necessary and effective measures, in accordance with relevant provisions of international law and international standards of human rights.

The Ministers underlined the importance of strengthening border controls and called for joint action against illegal and irregular migration. They proposed a semestrial review of the cooperation in this field. They encouraged the conclusion between States of the region of agreements concerning the readmission of persons, illegally residing in each State's territory.

A common concern was expressed with regard to the proliferation of drug-related criminal activities adversely affecting the countries of the Balkan region. A regional conference on combating the illicit cultivation, production, processing, trafficking, trade and use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances was proposed as a starting-point for a more comprehensive cooperation among the participating countries and with the involvement of the relevant international bodies and programmes such as the United Nations International Drug Control, the relevant Poland and Hungary Assistance for Economic Restructuring (PHARE) programmes and the Council of Europe Pompidou Group.

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The Ministers expressed their belief that the above agreements shall contribute to the overall objective of stability, security and cooperation in Europe. They are convinced that they are in consonance with the EU Platform for action and the Royaumont process and accordingly expect that they will be fully supported by the European Union.

The Ministers expressed satisfaction with the results achieved and constructive spirit of their meeting. They shared the view that this represents a new beginning of multilateral regional cooperation. With that in view the Ministers decided to hold a meeting of their representatives in Sofia to examine the proposals presented during their meeting as well as to coordinate future action. It was agreed to hold the next meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Countries of South-Eastern Europe in 1997 in Greece.

Sofia, 7 July 1996

ANNEX II

Address by the Prime Minister of the Republic of Bulgaria, H.E. Mr. Jean Videnov, to the participants in the meeting

May I express the gratitude of the Government of the Republic of Bulgaria for the support rendered by the States and international organizations and institutions that you represent to our initiative to launch a new all-out process of stability, security and cooperation in South-Eastern Europe.

The conference which Bulgaria hosts became possible owing to the joint constructive efforts of the countries of the region; these efforts received the wide support of the international community, among others. It is an expression of the political will to open up new prospects to strengthen regional stability, security and cooperation along the lines of good-neighbourliness. We hope the Sofia conference in compliance with the European criteria and standards will test a new approach, namely the pooling of the countries' efforts for the implementation of economically significant projects in the area of infrastructure. It will be an omission if I fail to underline our ambition to give a further impulse to the peace process on the territory of the former Yugoslavia. In short, the purpose of this conference as we see it is to outline the ways and actions to establish a new process of multilateral cooperation in the region of South-Eastern Europe with the involvement of all countries.

The Government of the Republic of Bulgaria believes, and I am sure the belief is shared by all of us, that the stability, security and cooperation among us should be in the foreground, and that naturally, we should take specific actions for our common interests and for what we have in common to materialize. This is the shortest way to find a deserving place in united Europe to which we aspire.

The Republic of Bulgaria has always been an adherent to a constructive and good-willed approach in the State-to-State relations. Bulgaria was and will be in favour of the promotion of good-neighbourliness and cooperation and finding a peaceful, just and lasting solution to all disputes. Guided by this principle-abiding position, throughout the Yugoslav conflict our country was consistently pursuing a line of refraining and non-interference, placing all parties involved in the conflict on a par, a parallel approach to the lifting of the economic sanctions regime along with progress made in the peaceful settlement. That policy of our country was one of the essential stabilizing factors in the region and received recognition of the international community. However, the cost was particularly high in the hard period of transition we are going through.

We count on the solidarity and support of the international community which is able and I believe, willing, to help not just in the economic reconstruction and development of the countries that were directly involved in the conflict but also to assist the countries that sustained an equally heavy burden which was not their fault. It will be difficult to achieve the general stabilization of the situation in the region and the establishment of good-neighbourliness and cooperation in State-to-State relations bilaterally and multilaterally that we

and all of Europe seek unless there is economic stability and viable and prospering market economy in all Balkan countries.

The full peace implementation of Bosnia and Herzegovina would create preconditions to stabilize the situation in the conflict-hit regions and even farther. It would open up prospects on the basis of the combined efforts of the international community and of the countries of the region to overcome the recurrences of chronic instability in the Balkans and make the Balkans a region of real possibilities and prospects of fruitful and mutually advantageous cooperation. From this viewpoint it is particularly important to give support to the ongoing process of the complete normalization between the States, emerging after the collapse of the former Yugoslavia.

The new situation in Europe freed of the spirit of confrontation and division creates even broader opportunities for the development of multilateral regional cooperation. This new situation gives rise to the hope that we are not far from the day when each country in the region will see its neighbour first and foremost as a partner. I think this conference corresponds completely to this aspiration and hope. Moreover, multilateral cooperation in the Balkans has history and traditions. In the course of decades the States of this region promoted State-to-State cooperation on a bilateral and multilateral basis. There were two meetings of the Balkan countries' Ministers for Foreign Affairs: in 1988 in Belgrade and in 1990 in Tirana. The joint communiqués that they adopted contain specific agreements on joint action in the political, economic, cultural and humanitarian areas. Steady dialogue was maintained on a wide range of problems of common interest. No doubt it had an exceptionally important role in the maintenance of political stability in the region at a good level.

The idea of seeking common interests and points of contacts in the implementation of large-scale projects - cross-border cooperation and communication infrastructure - is exceptionally topical today. Within a year alone Sofia was the venue of highly representative international meetings on trans-European infrastructure and telecommunications. The Balkan Energy Centre is already operating. The Ministers of Transport are to meet in November 1996.

The humanitarian, social and cultural component of interrelations is not the least. Regardless of the existence of serious problems we believe there exists significant communication potential which can play a stabilizing role in the region.

We are satisfied that Sofia was chosen to be the venue of the next meeting of the Defence Ministers on strengthening security and confidence in the Balkans.

By intention and nature the regional forms of cooperation in the Balkans are called to additionally strengthen and diversify integration processes in Europe. In this context the States of South-Eastern Europe have an interest not to set up an isolated club but be open and create and expand and, naturally, use the potential of cooperation in various areas with other regional and pan-European structures. Our position, which I believe is shared by other States in the region is that multilateral cooperation can and must develop as part of pan-European integration processes. The European target of regional

cooperation only emphasizes its open nature. This target presupposes cooperation with adjoining regions and with leading world and European political and economic factors alike.

The Bulgarian Government hopes that the outset of an all-out process of multilateral cooperation in south-eastern Europe will have a powerful positive impact to overcome the negative idea of the region as a zone of insecurity and conflicts, a zone substantially falling short of European criteria of democratic and stable development. I would like to reiterate that we will count on the active support of international institutions and countries outside this region.

We have reasons to count on such a support. The result of the last meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the European Union and of the associated countries in Florence clearly and unambiguously determine the development of the regional forms of cooperation as a step towards the building of a united Europe. This is why this conference alike is an open initiative with special representative international participation which we welcome.

While I stress the need for the promotion of multilateral cooperation, I would not belittle the potential and prospects for the promotion of bilateral relations. These two forms are not in contradiction, they complement and enrich each other.

States in the region will only stand to gain if they approach the solution of the problems with pragmatism, good will and common sense, if they avoid differences and disputes and stake on the community of interests rather. It is true the problems left over from the past are not few, nor are they easy to solve. But it is also true that the Balkan nations have many values, history and culture in common. The Balkans are one of the cradles of European and world civilization; democracy was born here in antiquity. Other regions became within a short time an example of rapid development and a paragon of civilized State-to-State relations. Let us follow them. Together let us change the stereotypes which attach the attributes difficulty, risk and conflict to our region. Multilateral cooperation will help us in this respect and provide further possibilities for development prosperity, security, stability, confidence and respect.

We do believe that despite the difficulties the goals we set are realistic and feasible. The wishes for success, the solidarity of our friends in other parts of Europe, the United States of America and the Russian Federation and the opportunities afforded by the fact that the starting process is in consonance with the present lasting interests of the Balkan countries are the guarantees. Together we can and must use them.

Sofia, 6 July 1996

ANNEX III

Chairman's summary

On 6 and 7 July 1996, a Conference on Stability, Security and Cooperation in South-Eastern Europe was held in Sofia.

A thorough exchange of views was held, with the participation of Ministers and heads of delegations from countries of the region, the High Representative, representatives of interested countries and international institutions. It focused on security and cooperation in South-Eastern Europe, the interaction between different regionally oriented initiatives and the impact of regional cooperation on peace implementation in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

A common view was shared that the initiative to convene the Sofia meeting was a timely one and of particular significance since it originates from the region, with substantial potential for improving regional stability, increasing economic prosperity and enhancing overall integration with European institutions and organizations. It was stressed that efforts should focus on issues that bring countries together and do not set them apart, drawing on the historic lesson of Europe on achieving greater security and stability through cooperation and integration.

The participants pointed out that the meeting contributes to mutually complement and reinforce different regionally oriented initiatives, especially the common platform of EU and the South-East European Cooperative initiative of the United States Government. They noted that the processes initiated in Royaumont and Sofia are now at a stage when projects need to be identified, endorsed and supported. Readiness to develop cooperation on matters of common interest with the countries of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation and the Central European Initiative was expressed.

It was stated that healing the wounds in Bosnia and Herzegovina shall bring the region together. The importance of reconciliation and reconstruction was particularly stressed. The countries of the region have the potential to contribute to economic reconstruction through appropriate arrangements. The participants reiterated their support to the activities of the High Representative.

The regional dimension was recognized as a key element for a return of all States to stability and prosperity. Democratic security, mature democratic institutions and respect for human rights are major factors enhancing development and social cohesion. A number of delegations noted that the full reintegration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia in the international community is of vital importance for lasting stability and cooperation in the region. One delegation pointed out that further steps are still needed to achieve this reintegration.

All participants stressed their firm commitment to contribute to the success of the process initiated in Sofia providing multilateral forms of cooperation in the following areas: enhancing good-neighbourly relations

including confidence- and security-building measures; development of economic cooperation through cross-border cooperation, upgrading transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructures, trade and investment promotion: development of humanitarian, social and cultural contacts; cooperation in the field of justice, combat of organized crime, illicit drug and arms trafficking; and elimination of terrorism.

The Ministers agreed that the concrete ideas and proposals which were submitted to the meeting will be duly examined at a meeting of their representatives in Sofia.

All participants expressed their gratitude to the Government of Bulgaria for launching the initiative and organizing the meeting.

It was agreed to hold the next Meeting of Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Countries of South-Eastern Europe in 1997 in Greece.

Sofia, 7 July 1996

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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES BY THE SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND THE INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE UNITED NATIONS

Report of the Secretary-General

1. At its forty-ninth session, the General Assembly adopted resolution 50/34 of 6 December 1995 concerning the implementation of the Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples by the specialized agencies and the international institutions associated with the United Nations. In paragraph 13 of that resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to continue to assist the specialized agencies and other organizations of the United Nations system in working out appropriate measures for implementing the relevant resolutions of the United Nations and to prepare for submission to the relevant bodies, with the assistance of those agencies and organizations, a report on the action taken in implementation of the relevant resolutions, including that resolution, since the circulation of his previous report.

2. In a letter dated 4 April 1996, the Secretary-General transmitted the text of the resolution to the executive heads of the following specialized agencies and international institutions forming part of or associated with the United Nations, and invited them to submit the information requested for inclusion in the report referred to in the above paragraph:

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* A/51/50.

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United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)

United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)

United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)

World Food Programme (WFP)

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO)

World Health Organization (WHO)

World Bank

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

Universal Postal Union (UPU)

International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

International Maritime Organization (IMO)

World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)

International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO)

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

League of Arab States (LAS)

Organization of African Unity (OAU)

Organization of American States (OAS)

3. Summaries of the replies received from the international organizations concerned in response to the above-mentioned letter are given in document E/1996/85.

4. Summaries of additional replies received, together with such further information as may become available on relevant activities undertaken by the organizations concerned during the year, will be circulated in addenda to the present report.

5. In addition, the Secretary-General transmitted the text of the resolution to the various departments and other units of the United Nations Secretariat. Information received in that regard will also be circulated in addenda to the present report.

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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN AND DISASTER RELIEF ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS, INCLUDING SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE: SPECIAL ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE TO INDIVIDUAL COUNTRIES OR REGIONS

Assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti

Report of the Secretary-General

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The present report is submitted to the General Assembly pursuant to resolution 50/58 F of 12 December 1995 on assistance for the reconstruction and development of Djibouti. It provides a brief description of the progress made in the implementation of the resolution in Djibouti.

II. GENERAL SITUATION

2. The Republic of Djibouti is strategically situated in the Horn of Africa at the juncture of the Red Sea and the Indian Ocean. It has a coastline of 370 kilometres and common borders with Eritrea in the north, Ethiopia in the west and south and Somalia in the south-east. The country covers an area of 23,000 square kilometres characterized by an arid climate and extremely limited water and agricultural potential. Annual rainfall averages only 130 millimetres and there is no significant food production.

3. The country's population is estimated at 520,000, according to the 1991 census. With an annual natural growth rate estimated at 3.1 per cent, the population is projected to double in 22 years. In addition, the presence of a

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large group of refugees and displaced persons from neighbouring countries has placed enormous strain on the meagre resources available. The total number of refugees and displaced persons is not known, but estimates range from 100,000 to 150,000. The majority of Djiboutians are from the Afar and Issa ethnic tribes.

4. The population is mostly urban and is concentrated in the capital. This high urban concentration has led to many economic and social problems. In terms of human development, Djibouti is ranked, according to the Human Development Report 1994, as 163rd among the 173 countries reviewed. According to that report, the adult literacy rate is no more than 19 per cent, while life expectancy at birth is one of the lowest in the world (48 years). Women play an active role in the economy of Djibouti and constitute 32.2 per cent of the labour force. In the formal urban sector, they are employed mainly as clerical or administrative staff and in rural areas they play an important role in livestock raising.

5. The economy of Djibouti is dual and characterized by an important informal sector directed towards customers with low purchasing power and by a modern economy based on a solid port and airport infrastructure, serving a population with high purchasing power but depending almost entirely on imports.

6. Djibouti enjoys one of the most liberal economic regimes in Africa. Its currency is freely convertible and there are no controls on capital movement.

7. Because of the lack of natural resources, the economy of Djibouti is based on services, which contribute about 70 per cent of the country's gross domestic product (GDP), while the agricultural and industrial sectors remain very small. Djibouti enjoys a comparative advantage in the region thanks to its efficient port infrastructure, banking establishments, telecommunications facilities and to a certain extent the airport and the railroad link with Ethiopia.

8. Because of the political instability in the region and the resulting decline in goods and services, the economy has been declining in the past few years. Since all its needs are imported and there are few exports, Djibouti has a structural trade deficit and the overall budget deficit is covered in part by external aid.

9. Real GDP grew on average by 4 per cent over the period from 1988 to 1992, fuelled in part by a surge in the port activity resulting from the civil war and in part by the transit of massive food aid to the hinterland of Djibouti, Ethiopia and Somalia. The armed conflict in the north and south-west, which forced most of the country's development projects to a brutal halt, coupled with the dire socio-political situations prevailing in Ethiopia and Somalia, accelerated markedly the deterioration of Djibouti's economy.

10. At the social level, living conditions are very difficult, characterized by poor nutrition as a result of low purchasing power, poor health, widespread diseases such as tuberculosis and AIDS, inadequate educational facilities and limited qualified manpower. Above all, unemployment and urban overpopulation constitute critical problems, which are exacerbated by the influx of refugees from neighbouring countries.

11. According to available data, more than 40 per cent of health services are provided to foreigners who are attracted by the proximity and the quality of Djibouti's hospitals and health centres. With the recent conflicts in the Horn of Africa, refugees (mostly from Ethiopia and Somalia) have increased the number of non-Djiboutians who benefit from the national health services. The health services are free for both nationals and refugees and with the increasing numbers of beneficiaries the health system can no longer provide adequate services to the entire population. Moreover, the armed conflicts in the north of the country have caused physical damage to the health infrastructure.

12. The national education system consists of six years of primary education, four years of lower secondary education and three years of secondary general education.

13. Djibouti's primary education is at present provided by a network of 64 public and 9 private schools. Out of the 33,005 children who were in primary schools in 1994, 29,715 were enrolled in public schools and 3,290 in private or Koranic schools. Student-teacher ratios in primary schools range from 34 to 43 students per teacher in the rural areas and are about 46 in the city. Student-classroom ratios range from 35 to 81 students per classroom and average about 65. Some schools with large numbers of students are forced to deal with the problem by holding double shifts, a practice that may have to be extended if the growing demand for more public education cannot be met by increasing investment in more schools.

14. The employment situation is closely linked to the educational sector of the country. Each year, more than 4,000 young people who have had no access to a general secondary education or to any kind of professional training arrive on the labour market without any qualification. The number is expected to grow over the next few years, in particular in the capital.

15. It is estimated that more than 80 per cent of enterprises are within the informal and semi-informal sector, including a large number of informal micro-enterprises, which play a key role in the economy of the country.

III. OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT SITUATION

16. The recent changes in the region - the collapse of the old regime in Ethiopia, the independence of Eritrea and the civil war in Somalia - have affected Djibouti, which in the past two years has also experienced its own internal strife between the Government and opposition groups.

17. The political negotiation initiated shortly after the multi-party presidential elections of April 1993 culminated in the official signature of a national Peace and Reconciliation Accord. The main provisions of this agreement further confirm the Government's willingness to involve the Front pour la restauration de l'unité et la démocratie (FRUD), the rebel group, and all opposition groups in the democratization process.

18. In order to create an environment of peace and social stability, the Government has initiated a process of demobilization of soldiers, whose numbers

had increased from several thousand to some 20,000. This process may take some time, as opportunities to reintegrate the demobilized population into civilian life are not readily apparent and need to be explored in the overall context of the rehabilitation and reconstruction programmes.

19. The Government's present thinking is to provide each demobilized soldier with a financial allowance, which would facilitate the demobilization process. This would, however, require a substantial amount of cash, which may not be available in view of the budget deficit spurred by the war effort and the decline in government revenues.

20. The burden of the war effort, combined with a swelling civil wage bill, have further depressed the country's financial situation. Faced with financial obligations far exceeding its capacity, the Government has turned to once cash-rich public enterprises and drawn heavily on their reserves, to the point of depletion. As this internal source of financing is drying up, the volume of external aid, which had been significant, is now on a downward trend.

21. According to the World Bank, the 1993 budget deficit stood at an alarming 12 per cent of GDP. Despite a slight improvement in 1994, the budget deficit is likely to widen as a direct result of a sustained decrease in fiscal and non-fiscal revenues brought about by mounting inflationary pressures spurred by excessive borrowing from the banks. All this will culminate in less revenue being collected, which in turn will make the reimbursement of cumulated arrears (projected to reach 25 billion Djibouti francs in 1995) all the more problematic. A worsening current account position (10 per cent of GDP in 1993) compounds the overall situation of the economy.

22. The root causes of Djibouti's problems are economic. These are in part structural and in part compounded by continuous inflows of refugees from neighbouring countries undergoing war or civil strife. The country's frail economy is able to absorb less than 60 per cent of the workforce and most of those employed earn only subsistence wages. Consequently, most Djiboutians are poor and poverty is on the rise because of diminishing trade links with Ethiopia and Somalia.

23. The overall situation of the country is also characterized by limited pasture land and a high rate of livestock mortality. If there is no rainfall in the near future, the ground-water level will be reduced, resulting in a shortage of drinking water. Given the increasing influx of immigrants and refugees into Djibouti, the need for water is increasing. In the town of Djibouti, with 65 per cent of the total population, water sources in certain coastal areas have reached a high degree of salinity and imperil the agro-pastoral areas that were developed a few years ago. The drought is therefore not only the result of climatic change but is also structural to the extent that it is aggravated by overexploitation and consumption of scarce water resources. The situation has been exacerbated by the internal conflicts and the resultant displacement of the rural populations, who are confined to remote areas with no pasture for their livestock. They are now receiving food assistance from the national army.

24. With regard to social conditions, Djibouti is facing a serious health situation, with widely prevalent epidemic diseases. There are 3,000 new cases

of tuberculosis every year and malaria is on the increase. Sexually transmitted diseases are also increasing, signalling a situation that is difficult to control. Malnutrition continues to be a major public health problem, in particular in the prevailing situation of economic crisis and pressures from refugees and displaced persons. Drought is menacing over 100,000 people with the prospect of famine.

IV. MAJOR ISSUES

25. The situation in Djibouti has been adversely affected by the evolving critical situation in the Horn of Africa, the presence of tens of thousands of refugees and persons displaced from their countries, the extremes of local climate - cyclical droughts, torrential rains and floods such as those which occurred in 1989 - and the extremely limited financial capacity of the country to implement reconstruction and development programmes.

26. In addition, fighting between the Government and armed opposition groups in the north of the country resulted in a large displacement of the civilian population. It also resulted in the recruitment of 11,500 soldiers who must now be demobilized and reintegrated into civilian life.

27. The Government of Djibouti has expressed a strong desire for the demobilization of soldiers. The idea of demobilization started in early 1994 when the Government announced that security problems were under control in the previously war-affected areas. So far, steps have been taken to prepare the separation from the national army of 11,500 soldiers enlisted during the two-year conflict. The demobilization includes new recruits and former soldiers who enlisted during the hostilities.

28. Although the Government has undertaken to pay separation fees for the demobilized soldiers, it is highly unlikely that the demobilization process can proceed without external support. Given the need for a large reconstruction scheme, the food aid will be an incentive for the former soldiers and displaced persons to participate in rehabilitation activities involving the basic infrastructure, such as wells, health units and schools.

29. Djibouti has become a refugee hosting country. The increasing number of displaced persons and refugees, combined with the continuous flow of illegal immigrants in search of jobs and assistance, has become a matter of great concern to the Government.

30. Although there are no precise figures of the number of refugees, internally displaced persons and illegal immigrants, the Government believes that there are over 100,000 persons in need of assistance in the capital alone. It also claims that an equal number are affected by the drought.

31. Djibouti suffers from recurrent droughts. The first rains of 1994 started late in the southern parts of the country, while the northern region has not seen rain for over two years. Despite a normal rainfall in 1995, water sources remain low, resulting in migration of people to the capital.

32. Food requirements are met mostly through food imports, averaging some 60,000 tons of cereals annually. Djibouti's normal structural food aid requirement stands at about 18,000 tons. In 1995, the World Food Programme (WFP) provided 4,774 tons of commodities, valued at about US$ 3,011,731, to assist Somali and Ethiopian refugees from Somalia, but also to local schoolchildren, orphans and hospital patients and participants in food-for-work schemes.

33. The health situation has immediate and long-term implications. The Government is providing medical services not only to its own people but also to a large number of refugees from Ethiopia and Somalia seeking free medical treatment in Djibouti. Those refugees also bring with them diseases such as tuberculosis. While the immediate need is to strengthen the country's capacity to address the problems of tuberculosis, malaria, AIDS and malnutrition through immunization campaigns and provision of essential drugs, a longer-term solution must be found at the regional level to improve the health situation in the neighbouring countries.

34. Djibouti's education is currently under pressure to meet the challenges of growing unemployment, a rising demand from a young population and a large influx of refugees.

35. High drop-out rates of about 10 per cent per annum for the last two grades of primary school and an estimated drop-out rate of over 30 per cent at the end of the primary cycle, combined with only about 27 per cent of those completing primary education gaining a place in secondary school, represent a shocking loss of opportunity and potential. This high level of attrition at a stage when continuing learning is both optimal and desirable represents, from an educational and manpower planning perspective, a wasted national opportunity to expand and strengthen the human resource pool for the enhancement of national productivity. Improvement in the overall quality of both primary and secondary education will require tackling the internal inefficiencies in the existing system and improving services in keeping with the nation's need for an educational content responsive to the changes occurring in the national market economy.

36. Technical and vocational education in Djibouti begins at the secondary-school level. Opportunities of a limited and very specific kind exist for some students to pursue professional training. Clearly, there is an ongoing need to give the issue of growing national unemployment, especially among school drop-outs and youths, the urgent attention it deserves.

37. No active employment policies have been elaborated owing to the weak institutional capacity of the Ministry of Labour and Professional Training. The challenge, in terms of employment, is to be able to design a system that would target the unemployed according to the different categories: unskilled, school drop-outs, demobilized soldiers, refugees and women.

V. ROLE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

38. One characteristic of the operational activities of the United Nations system in Djibouti is the sustained and tight collaboration of all United Nations agencies present in the country to coordinate their efforts in order to respond to the growing social and economic problem of the refugees. The refugee situation in Djibouti is affecting not only general security but also the health sector. Djibouti's health infrastructure, although not fully developed, is accessible to all the local population. The influx of refugees from neighbouring countries affected by war who are benefiting from the health services has contributed to placing a heavy burden on the already weak public health infrastructure. That situation has also contributed to a deterioration of the environment and of the sanitation facilities in the country, especially in the capital, and resulted in an outbreak of cholera in July 1993.

39. The organizations of the United Nations system present in Djibouti are constantly dealing with that problem by developing activities related to repatriation, food distribution and education by initiating regrouping efforts to resettle refugees in camps and by clean-up operations in the capital.

40. Three months after the adoption of resolution 50/58 F by the General Assembly, the Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) undertook an official visit to Djibouti to discuss with both the national authorities and the donor community the reconstruction and rehabilitation needs of the country.

41. A special ad hoc contribution announced by UNDP has recently been translated into a fully approved project document for $428,000. The project seeks to address pressing rehabilitation needs through pilot activities in the three most affected areas of the country. It also aims at strengthening the capacity of the National Rehabilitation Committee in the design, implementation and monitoring of a coherent and well articulated national programme of rehabilitation based on the lessons learned from pilot exercises. Joint technical assessments missions, involving government representatives, the United Nations Disaster Management Team, local and international non-governmental organizations, were to undertake field visits in June to identify priority actions based on intense consultation with the populations. A full-fledged programme is expected to be elaborated and submitted to donors for financing by the end of 1996 or early 1997.

42. A major component of the structural adjustment programme remains the demobilization of up to 12,000 soldiers. UNDP has provided financial support to strengthen the National Demobilization Committee's capacity to implement the programme prepared by the World Bank. In response to the Government's intention to revive the round-table process initiated in 1995, UNDP is intensifying consultations with the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the major bilateral agencies to enlist their support for the organization and success of such meetings. Preliminary reactions from various quarters point to the convening of the round table in the last quarter of 1996.

43. In March and April 1996, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) conducted a repatriation operation of 4,052 Ethiopians,

reducing the total number of refugees from 23,991 to 19,939. In addition, over 200 urban refugees have been repatriated, reducing the urban refugee population to some 1,000. This follows a similar operation conducted between July and October 1995, which enabled the repatriation of 15,059 urban refugees to Ethiopia. A tripartite (Government of Djibouti/Government of Ethiopia/UNHCR) assessment mission to Ethiopia to determine the number of Djiboutian refugees in Ethiopia is envisaged. The ultimate aim is to repatriate an estimated number of 18,000 Djiboutians who fled during the civil war. As at 1 January 1996, there were 4,756 Ethiopians residing in the three remaining camps and 16,000 Somali refugees. The uncertain security and political climate have so far hampered any effective repatriation of Somali refugees.

44. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) is providing financial assistance ($40,000) to equip 17 primary schools, representing 77 classrooms in four districts (Obock, Dikhil, Ali Sabieh and Tadjourah). This is carried out in cooperation with the French Government, whose contribution covers essentially the physical rehabilitation of the school infrastructure (buildings, etc.). In a joint undertaking with the Italian Cooperation Agency (COOPI), UNICEF also contributed $60,000 to help strengthen mobil health teams in the Yoboki and Ali Sabieh areas and provide equipment for six health centres and essential drugs.

45. The World Food Programme (WFP) is pursuing its assistance to schools, hospitals and orphanages. Provision of school meals has been instrumental in increasing enrolment among rural children. In the last three years over 4,000 children in schools have participated in this project, 37 per cent of whom were female. Similarly, food aid to the health sector acts as an incentive for out-patients to attend centres for continuous treatment against tuberculosis and as a budgetary saving by providing rations through hospital meals to in-patients. To date, more than 3,000 recipients country wide benefit from the food assistance programme. Food aid through food-for-work has created opportunities for about 2,000 recipients, 25 per cent of them women, in both rural and urban areas and has contributed to the improvement of rural infrastructure, reforestation and other activities aiming at increasing the self-reliance of the rural population. Currently WFP is cooperating with donor representatives in Djibouti concerning a drought emergency operation to provide food aid to some 50,000 nomads whose animals have been affected by prolonged severe drought and animal sickness, with a consequent loss of income.

46. Concern about seeing beyond emergencies to long-term development accounts for the idea of food-for-work projects. The rationale behind those projects is that they provide additional food for people whose incomes are too low for them to have access to sufficient food for a healthy and productive life; the food supplied can also result in a substantial addition to their income. For this purpose, intensive infrastructure work has been undertaken in Djibouti by poor households, with food provided as an incentive. The objective of these multi-purpose food-for-work projects is to assist schemes for the improvement of rural infrastructure, reforestation training and other activities aimed at increasing the self-reliance of the rural population. As mentioned above, food aid through food-for-work has created opportunities for about 2,000 recipients, 25 per cent of them women, in both rural and urban areas.

47. A major accomplishment of UNDP is the identification of the new role of the private sector, now considered by the Government and the donor community one of the main engines for economic and social development. In 1993, UNDP played a leading role in this regard by pushing for institutional reform and legal restructuring of the private sector legislation through a reshaping of the Djiboutian code of commerce, that is, fiscality, an investment code, work legislation, investment promotion and so on. To that effect, a $500,000 grant was made available.

48. Protection of the environment has also been an important aspect of the UNDP agenda. A national workshop on sustainable development and environmental management was held in December 1993 together with a disaster management workshop in October 1993. The two workshops helped identify national needs and develop a strategy to put forward for the development of new legislation. Currently a project proposal with $350,000 aimed at strengthening the national capacity for environmental management and at preparing the National Environmental Action Plan is being reviewed by UNDP.

49. The Government of Djibouti continues to be seriously concerned about the presence in the country of a large number of refugees, displaced persons and illegal immigrants, victims of the instability, poverty and severe droughts witnessed by the subregion in recent years, who are putting heavy pressures on Djibouti's limited resources and overstretching the social and economic infrastructures. The authorities are estimating the number of these categories of persons at 120,000.

50. The living conditions in the refugee camps are at a minimal level and there are no prospects for the introduction of income-generating activities. The four camps are operated by the Office national d'Assistance aux réfugiés et sinistrés and are located in barely accessible sites close to the Ethiopian and Somali borders. Food assistance is provided by WFP, the medical and nutritional sectors are covered by the Association of Medical Doctors of Asia and the educational activities for some 1,500 refugee children in the camp schools are funded by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Evangelical Protestant Church of Djibouti provides limited social assistance to urban refugees living in the capital. In addition to its role of providing international protection to refugees, the UNHCR branch office in Djibouti funds and ensures the overall supervision and monitoring of the assistance programme. The initial assistance budget for 1995 is $1.5 million, not including the estimated $4 million in food assistance provided by WFP.

51. UNDP and WHO are involved in the fight against AIDS. In 1993, they contributed to the creation of a counselling unit that will help reduce the impact of the epidemic through education of the population, public sensitization and awareness programmes. The unit was established in the context of the National Committee for the Fight against AIDS, which UNDP has also supported by training its members. A project proposal drawn up by the members of the National Committee is also under evaluation by the AIDS Division of UNDP. In May 1995, UNDP and the Government signed a project document committing $89,000 out of UNDP country resources to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In the context of the United Nations/AIDS joint and co-sponsored programme, a thematic group,

comprising all United Nations agencies concerned, has been established by the Resident Coordinator.

52. The main concern of the Government of Djibouti regarding the health sector is to create a health system accessible to all. To do so, an effort has been made to develop primary health care, to establish rural health centres and to train health staff.

53. A project will be implemented in close cooperation with WHO to prevent HIV/AIDS by raising public awareness through the work of community health workers with high-risk groups.

VI. CONCLUSIONS

54. Djibouti's difficulties and problems are related first and foremost to the conflicts in the Horn of Africa, which have created a large movement of displaced populations and reduced the country's revenues as a result of loss of trade and services. In addition, the recurring emergency situations (drought, floods, epidemics), combined with large-scale destruction of livestock, water sources, health and education facilities as a result of the war in the country, have considerably increased Djibouti's emergency and humanitarian needs.

55. As a result of a major repatriation programme to Ethiopia and a stricter national policy, the pressure from refugees, displaced persons and illegal immigrants has been somewhat alleviated. However, the problem of displaced persons resulting from the civil strife (1991-1993) remains and needs to be adequately addressed through specific actions, including the rehabilitation of affected areas and reintegration schemes for the returnees. As for the remaining refugees in Djibouti (most of whom are of Somali origin), UNHCR will continue to seek, in partnerships with all concerned, durable solutions to their plight.

56. In this respect, the most feasible long-term solution to the presence of the refugees in Djibouti would require regional political agreements that would enable these immigrants to return to their countries and keep potential newcomers in their places of origin. This long-term action would require the formal political commitment of the concerned countries and could be facilitated by the United Nations system in close cooperation with the Djibouti-based Intergovernmental Authority for Drought and Development.

57. There is also an urgent need to support the Government's demobilization programme through budgetary support in order to alleviate the financial constraints of demobilizing thousands of military personnel. Demobilization is a major issue that needs to be addressed in a larger context of rehabilitation and development, and is a necessary condition to the restoration of peace, stability and national reconciliation. It will encourage the internally displaced to regain confidence and return to their homes, and will also alleviate the heavy financial burden on the national budget.

58. The immediate need is for a rehabilitation and reconstruction of damaged or destroyed social infrastructures (schools, dispensaries, water facilities) in

all regions that have been affected by civil strife. External assistance sources will be requested to provide the necessary financial support, as well as equipment and materials, needed for the reconstruction phase.

59. In order to initiate the rehabilitation process, an effort will need to be made by the authorities to encourage displaced populations to return to the towns and villages they have left before serious efforts are made to restore public services. In this way, community participation in the renovated facilities will transfer to the community itself a sense of pride and ownership in the running and maintenance of services at the local level.

60. The Government is facing critical financial difficulties resulting from the civil strife in the country in the past few years. It is estimated that at least $30 million will be urgently needed to mitigate the socio-economic impact of the war. In order to alleviate the financial difficulties, the Government has initiated a demobilization process of some 12,000 military personnel. However, as this process will take several years to complete, it is appropriate to plan short-term budgetary aid and to assist in the economic and social reintegration of those demobilized.

61. The large numbers of primary school drop-outs with insufficient skills to enter a restricted labour market and the increasing numbers of young illiterate suggest a problem that needs serious consideration. The challenge will be to try to reform the educational system in order to make it less costly, more accessible and more relevant to the needs of the country. Unless more effort is made to educate and train Djiboutians, the kind of manpower development challenges now facing the country's fragile and declining economy will be difficult to meet, both in the short and the long term.

62. In order to understand better the emergency situation, it is important to assess separately the short-term needs of the different population groups, namely, refugees, illegal immigrants, internally displaced persons and demobilized soldiers.

63. While a comprehensive survey should be carried out to ascertain the precise nature of damage incurred and to determine the technical specifications of the equipment required, reports from the authorities suggest that a number of schools and dispensaries in the Obock and Tadjoura districts require immediate attention.

64. A well-coordinated action by the local authorities and the active participation of returnees, including demobilized soldiers, may secure the financial and technical support needed to get the job done quickly and effectively. In this regard, a number of projects could be initiated or reactivated in the following sectors: basic urban infrastructure maintenance, road construction and maintenance, afforestation and reforestation, maintenance of water sources, wells and so on. This would also alleviate the critical unemployment situation as it would allow greater access to economic opportunities. Food aid would be an incentive for the former soldiers and returnees to participate in the rehabilitation activities. The Government has also expressed its preference to "cash and food-for-work" over free food distribution.

65. Such a rehabilitation programme will require an international presence in the affected areas in order to provide the necessary technical support and, more importantly, a sense of security and confidence to the population. In this context, UNDP could serve as the coordinating body for a cross-mandate operation on behalf of all United Nations agencies, including the United Nations Volunteers, enlisting their active support in specific area- and community-based rehabilitation and reconstruction schemes. A phased-approach strategy should be adopted in harmony with the return of the displaced population and the pace of the demobilization process. The current UNDP-assisted rehabilitation programme should contribute to the restoration of peace and stability and have a positive impact on the living conditions of the population.

66. In conjunction with the rehabilitation programme and as soon as the majority of the displaced population have returned, reconstruction projects with high labour intensity will be initiated, for both public socio-economic infrastructure and private properties (housing, farms, shops, etc.).

67. These projects could be implemented by small private contractors, with the strong participation of the communities. Measures will have to be taken to support the creation of micro-enterprises in all branches of activities (commerce, agriculture, fisheries, services, crafts), with an emphasis on the use of technology appropriate to the local conditions and the use of credit and other financing mechanisms (fonds de garantie). Organizations of the United Nations system present in Djibouti are constantly dealing with that problem by developing activities related to repatriation, food distribution and education, as well as by initiating regrouping efforts to resettle refugees in camps, and by clean-up operations in the capital.

68. The Secretary-General remains deeply committed to the implementation of General Assembly resolution 50/58 F. He calls upon the international community to provide financial support to enable him to provide assistance to meet urgent socio-economic programmes for the reconstruction and development process in Djibouti.

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GENERAL AND COMPLETE DISARMAMENT

Letter dated 15 July 1996 from the Permanent Representative of Ukraine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

On the instructions of my Government, I have the honour to transmit herewith the address given by His Excellency Mr. Leonid Kuchma, the President of Ukraine, on the occasion of the signing of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty, which took place on 11 April 1996 in Cairo (see annex).

I would be grateful if you could have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly under item 71 of the preliminary list.

(Signed) Anatoli M. ZLENKO
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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ANNEX

Address given on 11 April 1996 in Cairo by the President of Ukraine on the occasion of the signing of the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty

It is generally recognized that solving the problem of the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons is one of the most urgent issues of the present day. The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), to which Ukraine acceded as a full member in 1994, is an important instrument of the non-proliferation regime.

The first 25-year period of the authority of the NPT has demonstrated vividly that the ideas the Treaty is based upon have found wide support from the majority of countries of the world. Though the NPT is not an ideal document in the strict sense of the word, it nevertheless plays the role of an important starting-point for the nuclear disarmament process. For this reason, in assessing the international non-proliferation regime as a system that has justified itself in principle, it is necessary to continue efforts for the improvement and development of specific mechanisms for the practical implementation of the norms included in it.

One such mechanism strengthening the non-proliferation regime and of utmost importance for the realization of article VII of the Treaty consists of regional measures and, in particular, the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones in Latin America (Treaty of Tlatelolco, 1967), in the South Pacific region (Treaty of Rarotonga, 1985) and in South-East Asia (Treaty signed in December 1995).

Conclusion of one more international legally binding document on the creation of a nuclear-weapon-free zone on the African continent is certainly a new and tangible contribution to the process of strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime and of supporting strategic stability in the world.

Highly appreciating the peaceful efforts of the African countries, on behalf of Ukraine, a State that has voluntarily rejected a military nuclear potential that is third in size in the world, I sincerely welcome the leaders of all the States that are today signing this important document. Along with the other treaties on nuclear-weapon-free zones, it will further reduce nuclear programmes by banning deployment, testing and use of nuclear weapons on a considerable part of the territory of our planet.

Signing the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty should prompt other States, and first of all the nuclear States, to more intensive cooperation on the development and conclusion of new agreements concerning this problem and, in particular, of a comprehensive test-ban treaty and of a convention on the prohibition of production of fissile material for military purposes.

We are convinced that universal international cooperation aimed at protecting our fragile world from the threat of a nuclear catastrophe will necessarily bring the desired results.

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STATUS OF THE PROTOCOLS ADDITIONAL TO THE GENEVA CONVENTIONS OF 1949 AND RELATING TO THE PROTECTION OF VICTIMS OF ARMED CONFLICTS

Report of the Secretary-General

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. On 9 December 1994, the General Assembly adopted resolution 49/48 entitled "Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts". In paragraph 6 of the resolution, the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit to it at its fifty-first session a report on the status of the additional Protocols based on information received from Member States.

2. Pursuant to that request, the Secretary-General, by a note dated 22 December 1994 and a reminder dated 20 December 1995, invited Member States to transmit to him, by 30 June 1996 and for inclusion in the report, the information requested in paragraph 6 of the resolution.

3. As at 9 July 1996, replies had been received from the following States: Australia, Austria, Chile, Colombia, Cyprus, Italy, Luxembourg, Slovakia and Ukraine. They are reproduced in the present report. Additional replies will be reproduced as addenda to it.

4. The list of all States that are parties to the Protocols 1/ Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 2/ as at 18 June 1996, as communicated by the competent authorities of the Government of Switzerland, depositary of the Protocols, appears in the annex to the present report.

1/ United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 1125, Nos. 17512 and 17513.

2/ Ibid., vol. 75, Nos. 970-973.

II. INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM MEMBER STATES

AUSTRALIA

[Original: English]

[1 July 1996]

1. Protocol I was signed for Australia on 7 December 1978. Australia's instrument of ratification with declarations regarding articles 5, 44 and 51 to 58 was deposited on 21 June 1991. The Protocol thus entered into force for Australia on 21 December 1991. A declaration was deposited for Australia on 23 September 1992, accepting the competence of the International Fact-finding Commission pursuant to article 90.2 (a).

2. Protocol II was also signed for Australia on 7 December 1978. The instrument of ratification was deposited on 21 June 1991 and entry into force occurred on 21 December 1991.

3. In December 1994, Australia hosted the Second Regional Conference on International Humanitarian Law, convened by the Australian Red Cross in cooperation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Australian Defence Studies Centre. The Conference was designed to reinforce the implementation of and respect for international humanitarian law and to examine ways of bringing regional perspectives to bear on the debates that followed in 1995, in particular at the International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

4. The genesis of the Conference reflects its focus on the modernization and dissemination of international humanitarian law. In 1993, Australia was one of over 160 countries that took part in the International Conference for the Protection of War Victims, convened in Geneva by the Government of Switzerland. Debate at the Conference encouraged the Government of Australia to join with other countries of the region to look for ways of improving the level of attention being given to the protection of war victims.

5. The Conference was given additional immediacy by its timing in the lead up to the 1995 Intergovernmental Expert Meeting on the Protection of War Victims. The review of the 1980 Convention on Prohibitions or Restrictions on the Use of Certain Conventional Weapons which May Be Deemed to Be Excessively Injurious or to Have Indiscriminate Effects, and the 26th International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

6. The Conference was enriched by a diverse group of participants, from a wide variety of countries as well as from a wide range of individual backgrounds, including government, military, academic and non-governmental organization participants. It provided an opportunity to discuss the most pressing contemporary issues relating to international humanitarian law, including the protection of women and of children in armed conflict, the provision of emergency relief, peace-keeping, protection of cultural property and developments in international criminal law.

7. The Second Regional Conference represented an important step towards the modernization of international humanitarian law, and in encouraging regional adherence to existing instruments including the Protocols. The proceedings are published in Shelters from the Storm: Developments in International Humanitarian Law, edited by William Maley and published by the Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra (1995).

8. Australia's statement to the Sixth Committee of the General Assembly at its fiftieth session under agenda item 140, "United Nations Decade of International Law", referred in more detail to the Second Regional Conference on International Humanitarian Law, hosted by Australia.

AUSTRIA

[Original: English]

[9 July 1996]

1. Austria ratified the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts (Protocols I and II) on 13 August 1982. Protocols I and II entered into force on 13 February 1983. The following reservations were made at the time of ratification (translation):

(a) Reservation with regard to article 57, paragraph 2, of Protocol I

"Article 57, paragraph 2, of Protocol I will be applied on the understanding that, with respect to any decision taken by a military commander, the information actually available at the time of the decision is determinative."

(b) Reservation with regard to article 58 of Protocol I

"In view of the fact that Article 58 of Protocol I contains the expression 'to the maximum extent feasible', sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) will be applied subject to the requirements of national defence."

(c) Reservation with regard to article 75 of Protocol I

"Article 75 of Protocol I will be applied insofar as

(a) Paragraph 4 (e) is not incompatible with legislation providing that any defendant, who causes a disturbance at the trial or whose presence is likely to impede the questioning of another defendant or the hearing of a witness or expert witness, may be removed from the courtroom;

(b) Paragraph 4 (h) is not incompatible with legal provisions authorizing the reopening of proceedings that have resulted in a final declaration of conviction or acquittal."

(d) Reservation with regard to Articles 85 and 86 of Protocol I

"For the purposes of judging any decision taken by a military commander, articles 85 and 86 of Protocol I will be applied on the understanding that military imperatives, the reasonable possibility of recognizing them and the information actually available at the time that decision was taken, are determinative."

(e) Reservation with regard to Article 6 of Protocol II

"Article 6, paragraph 2 (e), of Protocol II will be applied insofar as it is not incompatible with legislation providing that any defendant, who causes a disturbance at the trial or whose presence is likely to impede the questioning of another defendant or the hearing of a witness or expert witness, may be removed from the courtroom."

2. In addition, at the time of ratification of Protocols I and II Austria made also the following declaration provided for under article 90 of Protocol I:

"In compliance with article 90 of Protocol I the Republic of Austria declares that she recognizes ipso facto and without special agreement, in relation to any other High Contracting Party accepting the same obligation, the competence of the commission."

CHILE

[Original: Spanish]

[25 January 1996]

The Government of Chile ratified the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 on 24 April 1991. In so doing, it made the declaration referred to in article 90 of Protocol I, whereby it recognizes the competence of the International Fact-finding Commission.

COLOMBIA

[Original: Spanish]

[12 January 1995]

1. The Government of Colombia transmitted the text of the Second Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts (Protocol II) to the Congress of the Republic for adoption.

2. The National Congress adopted Protocol II and, pursuant to article 241.10 of the National Constitution, the text of the Protocol and the act authorizing its adoption are under review by the Constitutional Court, which will take a decision on its constitutionality.

CYPRUS

[Original: English]

[8 November 1995]

Cyprus has ratified the Protocol Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts (Protocol II).

ITALY

[Original: English]

[30 April 1996]

1. Following the enactment of Law No. 762 of 11 December 1985, Italy ratified Additional Protocols I and II of 8 June 1977, relating to the protection of victims of international armed conflicts and to the protection of victims of non-international armed conflicts, respectively.

2. Upon deposit of the instruments of ratification of the said Protocols, on 27 February 1986, Italy made the declaration provided for under article 90 of Protocol I, whereby it accepts the competence of the International Fact-finding Commission.

LUXEMBOURG

[Original: French]

[6 March 1995]

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg has taken all the actions called for in General Assembly resolution 49/48 entitled "Status of the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts".

SLOVAKIA

[Original: English]

[27 June 1996]

1. Slovakia has been a party to the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and relating to the protection of victims of armed conflicts since 1 January 1993 on the basis of the notification of succession on 2 April 1993.

2. Furthermore, Slovakia in 1995 made the declaration provided for under article 90 of Protocol I and deposited it with the Government of the Swiss Confederation.

UKRAINE

[Original: Russian]

[21 March 1995]

1. Recognizing the enduring significance of the rules of humanitarian law relating to the victims of armed conflicts, Ukraine has consistently advocated, and continues to advocate, the need for constant respect for those rules, which have been elaborated through a process of international cooperation in this sphere.

2. It is from this standpoint that Ukraine approaches the solution of specific problems of a humanitarian character. For instance, representatives of Ukraine participated directly in the preparation of such instruments of international law as the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the Protocols Additional thereto of 1977. Ukraine has ratified these important international instruments and accordingly complies with their provisions in practice. It should be noted that, in ratifying the Additional Protocols, Ukraine declared that it recognized the competence of the International Fact-finding Commission established pursuant to article 90 of Additional Protocol I.

3. Representatives of Ukraine also participated in the work of the International Conference for the Protection of War Victims, held in Geneva from 30 August to 1 September 1993. They actively supported the concluding declaration adopted at the Conference regarding the necessity of preventive measures and of ensuring the strict observance of the rules of international humanitarian law in the armed conflicts that have been taking place in recent times in a number of regions of the world. In this connection, reference might also be made to the fact that the delegation of Ukraine was one of the sponsors of General Assembly resolution 49/48 of 9 December 1994.

4. It goes without saying that Ukraine will in the future continue to support the efforts of the international community aimed at ensuring respect for the rules of international humanitarian law during armed conflicts.

ANNEX

List of States parties to the Protocols Additional to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 as at 18 June 1996 a/

State	Date of ratification, accession, or succession
Albania	16 July 1993
Algeria b/, c/	16 August 1989
Angola b/ (Protocol I only)	20 September 1984
Antigua and Barbuda	6 October 1986
Argentina b/	26 November 1986
Armenia	7 June 1993
Australia b/, c/	21 June 1991
Austria b/, c/	13 August 1982
Bahamas	10 April 1980
Bahrain	30 October 1986
Bangladesh	8 September 1980
Barbados	19 February 1990
Belarus c/	23 October 1989
Belgium b/, c/	20 May 1986
Belize	29 June 1984
Benin	28 May 1986
Bolivia c/	8 December 1983
Bosnia and Herzegovina c/	31 December 1992
Botswana	23 May 1979
Brazil c/	5 May 1992
Brunei Darussalam	14 October 1991
Bulgaria c/	26 September 1989
Burkina Faso	20 October 1987
Burundi	10 June 1993
Cameroon	16 March 1984
Canada b/, c/	20 November 1990
Cape Verde (Protocol I) c/	16 March 1995
(Protocol II)	16 March 1995
Central African Republic	17 July 1984
Chile c/	24 April 1991
China b/	14 September 1983
Colombia (Protocol I)	1 September 1993
(Protocol II)	14 August 1995
Comoros	21 November 1985
Congo	10 November 1983
Costa Rica	15 December 1983
Côte d'Ivoire	20 September 1989
Croatia c/	11 May 1992
Cuba (Protocol I only)	25 November 1982
Cyprus (Protocol I)	1 June 1979
(Protocol II)	18 March 1996
Czech Republic	5 February 1993

State	Date of ratification, accession, or succession
Democratic People's Republic of Korea (Protocol I only)	9 March 1988
Denmark b/, c/	17 June 1982
Djibouti	8 April 1991
Dominica	25 April 1996
Dominican Republic	26 May 1994
Ecuador	10 April 1979
Egypt b/	9 October 1992
El Salvador	23 November 1978
Equatorial Guinea	24 July 1986
Estonia	18 January 1993
Ethiopia	8 April 1994
Finland b/, c/	7 August 1980
France b/ (Protocol II only)	24 February 1984
Gabon	8 April 1980
Gambia	12 January 1989
Georgia	14 September 1993
Germany b/, c/	14 February 1991
Ghana	28 February 1978
Greece (Protocol I)	31 March 1989
(Protocol II)	15 February 1993
Guatemala	19 October 1987
Guinea	11 July 1984
Guinea-Bissau	21 October 1986
Guyana	18 January 1988
Holy See b/	21 November 1985
Honduras	16 February 1995
Hungary c/	12 April 1989
Iceland b/, c/	10 April 1987
Italy b/, c/	27 February 1986
Jamaica	29 July 1986
Jordan	1 May 1979
Kazakstan	5 May 1992
Kyrgyzstan	18 September 1992
Kuwait	17 January 1985
Lao People's Democratic Republic	18 November 1980
Latvia	24 December 1991
Lesotho	20 May 1994
Liberia	30 June 1988
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	7 June 1978
Liechtenstein b/, c/	10 August 1989
Luxembourg c/	29 August 1989
Madagascar c/	8 May 1992
Malawi	7 October 1991
Maldives	3 September 1991
Mali	8 February 1989
Malta b/, c/	17 April 1989
Mauritania	14 March 1980
Mauritius	22 March 1982

State	Date of ratification, accession, or succession
Mexico (Protocol I only)	10 March 1983
Micronesia (Federated States of)	19 September 1995
Mongolia (Protocol I) b/, c/	6 December 1995
(Protocol II)	6 December 1995
Mozambique (Protocol I only)	14 March 1983
Namibia	17 June 1994
Netherlands b/, c/	26 June 1987
New Zealand b/, c/	8 February 1988
Niger	8 June 1979
Nigeria	10 October 1988
Norway c/	14 December 1981
Oman b/	29 March 1984
Panama	18 September 1995
Paraguay	30 November 1990
Peru	14 July 1989
Philippines (Protocol II only)	11 December 1986
Poland c/	23 October 1991
Portugal	27 May 1992
Qatar b/, c/ (Protocol I only)	5 April 1988
Republic of Korea b/	15 January 1982
Republic of Moldova	24 May 1993
Romania	21 June 1990
Russian Federation b/, c/	29 September 1989
Rwanda	19 November 1984
Saint Kitts and Nevis	14 February 1986
Saint Lucia	7 October 1982
Saint Vincent and the Grenadines	8 April 1983
Samoa	23 August 1984
San Marino	5 April 1994
Saudi Arabia b/ (Protocol I only)	21 August 1987
Senegal	7 May 1985
Seychelles c/	8 November 1984
Sierra Leone	21 October 1986
Slovakia	2 April 1993
Slovenia c/	26 March 1992
Solomon Islands	19 September 1988
South Africa	21 November 1995
Spain b/, c/	21 April 1989
Suriname	16 December 1985
Swaziland	2 November 1995
Sweden b/, c/	31 August 1979
Switzerland b/, c/	17 February 1982
Syrian Arab Republic b/ (Protocol I only)	14 November 1983
Tajikistan	13 January 1993
The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia c/	1 September 1993
Togo c/	21 June 1984
Tunisia	9 August 1979
Turkmenistan	10 April 1992
Uganda	13 March 1991

State	Date of ratification, accession, or succession
Ukraine c/	25 January 1990
United Arab Emirates b/, c/	9 March 1983
United Republic of Tanzania	15 February 1983
Uruguay c/	13 December 1985
Uzbekistan	8 October 1993
Vanuatu	28 February 1985
Viet Nam (Protocol I only)	19 October 1981
Yemen	17 April 1990
Yugoslavia b/	11 June 1979
Zaire (Protocol I only)	3 June 1982
Zambia	4 May 1995
Zimbabwe	19 October 1992

Notes

a/ As communicated by the competent authorities of the Government of Switzerland, depositary of the Protocols. By a note dated 15 August 1990, the Permanent Observer Mission of Switzerland informed the Secretary-General as follows:

> "On 21 June 1989, the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs received a communication of 14 June 1989 from the Permanent Observer of Palestine to the United Nations Office at Geneva concerning Palestine's participation in the four Geneva Conventions of 12 August 1949 and their two additional Protocols of 8 June 1977. On 18 September 1989, the Federal Department for Foreign Affairs sent to the States parties to the Conventions an information note of 13 September 1989 regarding this communication, accompanied by the text of the latter. In the information note, the Swiss Federal Council, depositary of the Conventions, brings to the attention of the States parties that it is not in a position to settle the question whether the communication should be considered an instrument of accession within the meaning of the relevant provisions of the Conventions and their Additional Protocols."

b/ Ratification, accession or succession accompanied by a reservation and/or a declaration.

c/ Party which has made the declaration provided for under article 90 of Protocol I.

UNITED NATIONS

A S

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.
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GENERAL ASSEMBLY
Fifty-first session
Items 30, 33, 35 53, 67 and 154
of the preliminary list*
COOPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS
AND THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES
THE SITUATION IN THE MIDDLE EAST
QUESTION OF PALESTINE
CONSEQUENCES OF THE IRAQI OCCUPATION
OF AND AGGRESSION AGAINST KUWAIT
ESTABLISHMENT OF A NUCLEAR-WEAPON-
FREE ZONE IN THE REGION OF THE
MIDDLE EAST
MEASURES TO ELIMINATE INTERNATIONAL
TERRORISM

SECURITY COUNCIL
Fifty-first year

Letter dated 16 July 1996 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Oman to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the text of the final communiqué issued by the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Damascus Declaration States at the conclusion of their thirteenth meeting, held at Muscat on 13 and 14 July 1996 under the chairmanship of Mr. Yousef Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under items 30, 33, 35, 53, 67 and 154 of the preliminary list, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Mohammed A. AL-SAMEEN
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

* A/51/50.

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/...

ANNEX

[Original: Arabic]

Final communiqué of the thirteenth meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Damascus Declaration States, issued at Muscat on 14 July 1996

At the invitation of the Sultanate of Oman, the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Damascus Declaration States held their thirteenth meeting at Muscat on 13 and 14 July 1996 under the chairmanship of His Excellency Mr. Yousef Bin Alawi Bin Abdullah, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the Sultanate of Oman. The following were in attendance:

His Excellency Sheikh Hamdan Bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates;

His Excellency Sheikh Mohammed Bin Mubarak Al Khalifa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Bahrain;

His Royal Highness Prince Saud al-Faisal, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Saudi Arabia;

His Excellency Mr. Farouk al-Shara', Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Syrian Arab Republic;

His Excellency Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassem Bin Jabr Al Thani, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Qatar;

His Excellency Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jaber al-Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Kuwait;

His Excellency Mr. Amre Moussa, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Egypt.

His Excellency Sheikh Jamil Bin Ibrahim al-Hegelan, Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council, also participated in the meeting.

The Minsters met while bearing in mind the role played by the Damascus Declaration States in promoting Arab solidarity, advancing the interests of the Arab nation and safeguarding joint Arab security and in response to the requirements of the upcoming stage, which will be of great importance and moment as it relates, in particular, to the peace process in the Middle East in the light of regional and international developments.

The Ministers affirmed their full commitment to upholding and acting in accordance with the substance of the final communiqué adopted by the Arab Summit Conference held in Cairo from 21 to 23 June 1996 and the firm positions of principle adopted by the consensus of the Arab leaders with a view to strengthening Arab solidarity and establishing a just peace in response to the hopes and aspirations of the Arab nation, so as to advance the interests and

restore the impugned rights of that nation and in order to monitor the formulation of effective Arab action for the next stage.

The Ministers stressed the firm positions of principle of their countries with respect to the requirements of the peace process and the need to adhere to the principles on which it has been based since the Madrid Conference. This requires: complete Israeli withdrawal from the Golan to the line of 4 June 1967; complete and unconditional Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa to the internationally recognized boundaries; the complete withdrawal of Israel from all occupied Palestinian territories, including Arab Jerusalem; and recognition of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to exercise self-determination and establish an independent State on its own soil.

The Ministers commended the broad international consensus in support of the Arab position on the peace process, as embodied in the statements adopted by the Florence Summit of the European Union, the Lyon Summit of the group of seven industrialized countries and the Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organization of African Unity held in Cameroon, as well as in the statements adopted earlier by the Casablanca Islamic Summit Conference and the Cartagena Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries. In this context, the Ministers affirmed that the continuation of the peace process and the resumption of negotiations require commitment to the principles and norms on which the peace process is based, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), the principle of land for peace and the assurances given to the parties.

The Ministers expressed deep concern at the statements made by the Israeli Prime Minister during his recent visit to the United States, particularly those relating to his insistence on perpetuating Israel's occupation of Arab territories and on retaining Jerusalem under Israeli sovereignty as the capital of Israel on the pretext of safeguarding Israel's security. This is an attempt to impose a fait accompli that undermines the viability of the negotiations and is a departure from the principle of land for peace and a violation of the enduring principle on which the peace process is based, namely the achievement of balanced and equal security for all the States of the region without discrimination or exception and not merely for Israel alone. The same is true of his statements calling for a resumption of peace negotiations without preconditions, which is a denial and evasion of commitment to the principles derived from the relevant United Nations resolutions on which the peace process is based. Likewise, his call for reciprocity, when measured against the positions he has taken rejecting the principles and foundations of the peacemaking process, is an invitation for the region to return to a climate of confrontation and tension. The Ministers expressed surprise and astonishment that the Israeli Prime Minister should speak of democracy and human rights while Israel is pursuing a policy of occupation and of violating rights that are guaranteed by the Geneva Conventions to Arab citizens languishing under Israeli occupation and while it is being evasive and dilatory in discharging the obligations that it took upon itself within the framework of the peace process. In this context, the Ministers reaffirmed the conclusion of the Arab Summit Conference to the effect that the insistence of the Israeli Government on such positions is likely to cause a collapse of the peace process bringing with it

such dangers and consequences as will once more plunge the region into a maelstrom of tension and force all the Arab States to reconsider the steps taken vis-à-vis Israel in the framework of that process. The Israeli Government alone would bear the entire responsibility for such a situation.

The Ministers further reaffirm their commitment to the United Nations resolutions requiring the non-recognition and non-acceptance of any situation resulting from Israeli settlement activities in the occupied territories, inasmuch as such activities create no rights and no obligations. They consider that the establishment of settlements and the introduction of settlers violate the Geneva Conventions and the Madrid framework and represent an impediment to the peace process.

Recalling the assurances recently given by the United States of America, as one of the co-sponsors of the peace process, that that process must be based on the foundations established at the time it began at the Madrid Conference and on the principle of land for peace, that the Israeli Government must comply with all the undertakings given and all the obligations assumed, and that security cannot be attained without the achievement of peace, the Ministers call upon the co-sponsors of the peace process, the United States of America and the Russian Federation, on the European Union, China, Japan, the States members of the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries and other concerned States and on the United Nations and other international institutions to give practical effect to these assurances and to ensure that Israel does not violate the principles on which the peace process is based, supported as they are by United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), or the principle of land for peace, or the assurances provided to the parties, and that it fulfils all the commitments made in the framework of the peace process.

The Ministers reaffirmed the support of their countries for Syria's legitimate desiderata for the achievement of a just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East based on international legitimacy. They further expressed their support for Syria in overcoming the obstacles to the peace process being raised by Israel and in addressing the calumnies with which it is charging Syria for the purpose of halting the peace process.

The Ministers stressed that Israel must accede to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and place all of its nuclear facilities under the international inspection regime of the International Atomic Energy Agency as a fundamental step towards transforming the Middle East region, including the Gulf area, into a zone free of weapons of mass destruction, foremost among which are nuclear weapons.

The Ministers urged Iraq to commit itself to the full implementation of the Security Council resolutions relating to its aggression against Kuwait and called upon it to take the appropriate measures to release all Kuwaiti and third-country prisoners and detainees, to return the property seized, to abide by the compensation mechanism, to cooperate fully with the efforts of the United Nations Special Commission entrusted with the task of eliminating its weapons of mass destruction, and to comply with Security Council resolution 949 (1994) by refraining from any provocative or hostile action that threatens the State of Kuwait and the countries of the region. The Ministers welcomed the memorandum

of understanding signed on 20 May 1996 by Iraq and the United Nations for the implementation of Security Council resolution 986 (1995), which permits the sale of two billion dollars' worth of Iraqi oil, as a positive step towards mitigating the suffering of the Iraqi people for which the Iraqi Government bears full responsibility. They call for dispatch in giving effect to the memorandum of understanding. The Ministers renewed their full commitment to Iraq's unity and expressed their opposition to any policies or measures aimed at undermining its territorial integrity.

The Ministers reviewed new developments in connection with their countries' relations with the Islamic Republic of Iran from the point of view of their desire for such relations to be sound and positive. They stressed the great importance of security and stability in the Gulf region for the entire world and, in particular, for the countries and peoples of the region itself, including Iran, given that the security of the region is an integral part of the security of the Arab nation as a whole and is organically linked with the security and stability of all the Arab States.

The Ministers reaffirmed their solidarity with Bahrain and their full support for the measures it is taking to ensure its security and stability. They expressed firm rejection of any intervention in the internal affairs of Bahrain and affirmed that they would support it against any attempts at intimidation made by any party whatever.

Recalling that the Arab Summit Conference had urged Iran to respect the sovereignty of Bahrain within a framework of mutual respect and relations of good-neighbourliness, the Ministers expressed appreciation for the efforts made by Syria that had brought a halt to the media campaigns as a first step towards clearing the air with respect to Bahraini-Iranian relations and placing them on a basis of mutual understanding and good-neighbourliness so as to help strengthen the security and stability of Bahrain and the other States of the region.

The Ministers reviewed with great concern the issue of the Iranian occupation of the Greater Tunb, the Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa, three islands belonging to the United Arab Emirates, and the efforts that country is making to restore its sovereignty over the islands by peaceful means in accordance with established international practice relating to the peaceful settlement of disputes among States on the basis of the principles and norms of international law, including referral to the International Court of Justice. The Ministers recalled the honest and sincere initiatives taken and the repeated calls issued to the Islamic Republic of Iran by the United Arab Emirates, the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council, the Damascus Declaration States, the Council of the League of Arab States and, most recently, the Arab Summit Conference.

The Ministers reaffirmed the sovereignty of the United Arab Emirates over the islands and expressed unconditional support for all the peaceful measures taken with a view to restoring that sovereignty.

The Ministers reiterated their call to the Iranian Government to end its occupation of the islands, to desist from pursuing a policy of imposing <u>faits accomplis</u> by force, to halt the adoption of unilateral measures, to remove the

effects of any unilateral measures taken or any installations built, to adopt peaceful means of resolving the ongoing dispute in accordance with the principles and norms of international law, and to agree to the referral of the issue to the International Court of Justice.

The Ministers affirmed that the security and stability of the United Arab Emirates and the preservation of its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity are an integral part of the security of the Arab States of the Gulf and of the security of the Arab nation as a whole. They stressed that the Islamic Republic of Iran must adhere to the principles of good-neighbourliness, respect for the independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity of the States of the region and non-interference in the internal affairs of other States, must adopt peaceful means for the resolution of disputes between States in its relations with the States of the region and must meet the obligations that these principles entail.

The Ministers stated that their countries looked forward to positive change in Turkey's relations with Syria and expressed optimism that there were new signs in Turkish policy that heralded the establishment of relations of cooperation and good-neighbourliness between the two countries and the strengthening of joint Arab-Turkish interests. They expressed the hope that the Turkish Government would reconsider the Turkish-Israeli military agreement so as to avoid prejudice to the security of the Arab States.

The Ministers discussed violence and international terrorism and affirmed their condemnation of the terrorist bombing that took place at Khobar in Saudi Arabia on 25 June 1996. At the same time, they affirmed their full support and backing for Saudi Arabia in combating terrorism and expressed confidence in its ability to cope with such terrorist acts.

While the Ministers condemn attempts to stigmatize legitimate national resistance as terrorism, they condemn those acts of terrorism, sabotage and disruption in all their forms to which a number of States, including Arab States, are being subjected with the aim of undermining their security and stability. They express their support for these States and for the efforts being made and the steps being taken to convene an international conference to address the various aspects of the phenomenon of international terrorism. At the same time, they uphold the inalienable right to resist occupation and aggression. They call for the coordination of international efforts to bring a halt to acts of violence and terrorism, to ensure that those who perpetrate such acts are brought to justice and to prevent terrorist elements from using the territory of any State in order to obtain funding or arms supplies and from using foreign information media for purposes of incitement to acts of violence or terrorism.

The Ministers welcomed the Agreement on Principles reached by the Governments of Yemen and Eritrea concerning the submission of their dispute to international arbitration, affirming the need to promote neighbourly relations and the common interests of the two countries. That would have positive repercussions on the security and stability of the region.

The Ministers expressed their concern at the continuing deterioration of the situation in Somalia and called on the leaders of the warring factions to meet their responsibility to achieve overall national reconciliation and form a single national authority in which all groups of the Somali people are represented.

The Ministers further urged all the Afghan factions to abide by the cease-fire and to comply with the Mecca accord for the achievement of peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan.

The Ministers affirmed their support for the League of Arab States, for the enhancement of its standing and for the assignment to it of a more active role. There is a need for compliance with the Pact of the League and with the resolutions adopted by it in order to safeguard the higher interests of the Arab nation.

The Ministers expressed their gratitude and appreciation to the Sultanate of Oman, to the Omani Government under the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Qaboos Bin Said and to the Omani people for the hospitality with which they had been received, and they wished the country further progress and prosperity.

The Ministers look forward to holding their next meeting in Egypt in January 1997.